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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE OUR ENVIRONMENTAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND DIPLOMATIC AGENDA

FROM AMBASSADOR CAMERON HUME

1. (U) Summary. The upcoming World Oceans Conference, Coral Triangle Initiative Summit, and possible voyage of NOAA's Okeanos Explorer present unique opportunities to advance our environmental, scientific and diplomatic agendas in Indonesia and beyond. We should shape these events to advance our climate change policy objectives, improve our scientific knowledge of an underexplored part of the world, build awareness of the importance the Coral Triangle's ocean and coastal resources, and improve the perception of our commitment to the environment. Focus and attention will allow us to take advantage of many of these opportunities. But we need resources to fund the Okeanos Explorer. Our USAID mission is investigating a \$500,000 contribution and we are also exploring public-private partnerships. End summary.

May 2009: The CTI Summit and World Oceans Conference

2. (U) The Coral Triangle (encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste) is the epicenter of marine biodiversity on earth. But it is at risk from destructive fishing practices, poor coastal resource management, illegal and unmanaged logging, and climate change. With input from The Nature Conservancy, Indonesian President Yudhoyono developed the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), which was formally announced at the December 2007 climate change conference in Bali. The CTI will address environmental threats to coastal and marine resources while alleviating the poverty that is the root cause of many destructive activities. President Bush endorsed the CTI proposal at the 2007 APEC Summit. And with projected funding of \$32 million over five years, the U.S. is the largest bilateral donor.

3. (U) The respective heads of state will formally launch the Coral Triangle Initiative May 15, 2009, at a summit in Manado, Indonesia. The launch will take place immediately following the first World Oceans Conference, another Indonesian initiative. This international conference, which will run May 11-15, 2009, will focus on how oceans influence and are influenced by climate change, culminating in the signing of the Manado Declaration. The Manado Declaration, currently in preparation, will highlight the scientific interplay between changes in ocean chemistry and temperature, climate variability and weather patterns, and fishing stocks; the oceans' role as carbon sinks and how they can be used for carbon

sequestration; and how governments can collaborate on both adaptation and mitigation. The Manado Declaration is expected to set a global oceans policy framework for regional ocean management efforts like the Coral Triangle. Although we understand there is concern in Washington about whether the Manado Declaration will compete with the UN climate change process, Indonesian officials stress that the declaration will complement, not undermine, the success of the 2007 Bali conference. And Indonesia is open to U.S. suggestions on what to include in (and exclude from) the Manado Declaration.

Adding Value to our Efforts: the Okeanos Explorer

14. (U) Our public and financial support for the Coral Triangle Initiative as well as our active participation in the World Oceans Conference will be widely recognized by marine experts as a commitment to sustainable ocean management. But how can we use the Manado Declaration and the CTI Summit to make real contributions to science, improve public perception of our environmental leadership, and further President Bush's growing "Blue Legacy." This Mission believes a voyage by NOAA's newest exploration and research vessel Okeanos Explorer timed with the conference would create immediate, sustainable scientific and public diplomacy benefits. Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Freddie Numberi has invited the Okeanos Explorer to attend the conference, a critical step as Indonesia has historically refused permit requests for marine research.

15. (U) When it is fully outfitted next year, the Okeanos Explorer will be the most advanced marine exploration and research vessel in

JAKARTA 00001766 002 OF 002

the world. Remote-controlled vehicles will be able to plunge to the depth of six kilometers. The ship's "telepresence" technology allows scientists in remote command centers around the world to share in and guide the exploration and to analyze the results in real time. The ship will collect critical scientific information to support the Coral Triangle Initiative. For example, the Okeanos, in partnership with Indonesian research vessels, could conduct baseline surveys that correlate health of coral and other marine flora and fauna with oceanographic and bathymetric data. Through this collaboration, the voyage will teach Coral Triangle scientists important scientific skills to build their capacity for innovative research.

16. (U) There is also a secondary but still important public diplomacy element. The Okeanos Explorer's advanced image-capture, sampling, and communications systems will enable researchers and the public to view flora, fauna, and physical undersea features that would be otherwise inaccessible. These images could be beamed to the World Oceans Conference and CTI Summit to provide real-time exploration imagery of areas never before seen by man.

Making it Happen

17. (U) Getting the world's best exploration and research vessel to make its maiden voyage to the World Ocean Conference while conducting vital research in the most diverse marine area is too good an opportunity to pass up. But there are obstacles. Some are technical and logistical, but it is expected they can be overcome. A more immediate obstacle is in paying for the voyage. NOAA has no international budget for this unexpected opportunity, which would cost \$2-3 million. We are exploring a number of possibilities, including:

-- Use of some of the \$32 million in U.S. funding for the Coral Triangle Initiative to support scientific research and capacity building;

-- Collaboration with a media outlet who might be willing to sponsor some of the costs in return for being able to get footage of never-before explored ocean tracts;

-- Public-private partnerships with companies with an interest in marine conservation; and

-- Foundation funding for specific research projects.

We are also willing to devote our own resources to help fund this. Our bilateral USAID mission is investigating a \$500,000 contribution to the Okeanos Explorer to support Indonesia's desire for better oceans research and management of its fisheries and marine-protected areas.

18. (U) We need your help to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the Manado Declaration, World Oceans Conference, the Coral Triangle Initiative Summit and the Okeanos Explorer. From a policy standpoint, we will work closely with you to ensure that we advance U.S. interests at both events. To make this important opportunity a reality, I need your ideas on how to raise enough funds to pay for the Okeanos Explorer voyage to Indonesia. I would appreciate your advice on whether there are any official resources available for this initiative as well as ideas on foundations, corporations or nongovernmental organizations to approach for funding.

HUME